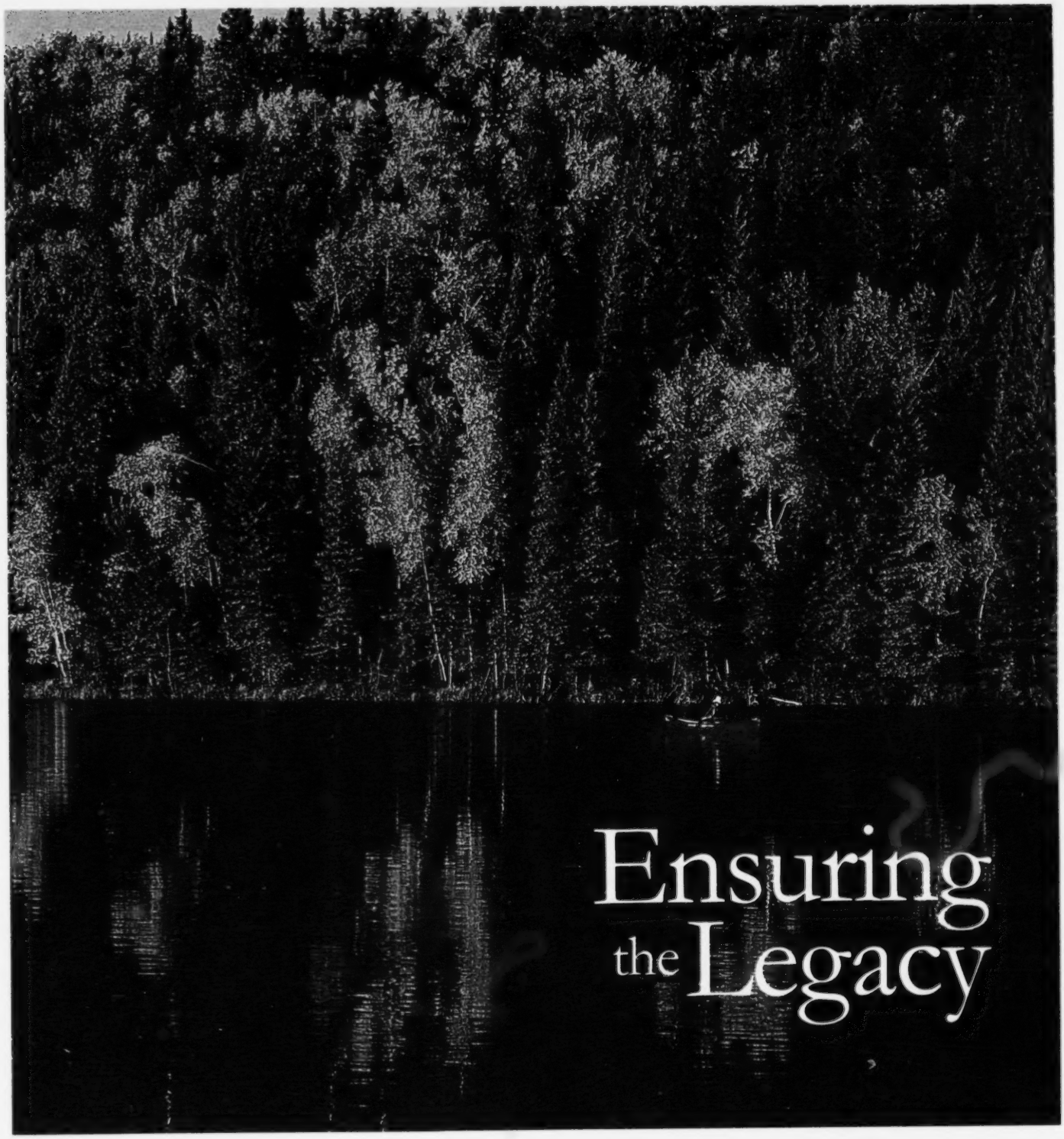
Saskatchewan
Environment

Legacy Plan for Provincial Parks



Minister's Message

At the core of this Legacy Plan is the recognition that we inherited our rich natural environment from those who came before us and that we will pass that heritage on to future generations.

Our provincial parks are a symbol of who we were, who we are and what we want to become. In 1931, Saskatchewan established the first provincial parks to enhance public access to natural features and to preserve them for future generations. Today Saskatchewan boasts 34 provincial parks, eight historic sites, 130 recreation sites and 24 protected areas comprised of 1.4 million hectares of land.

Our challenge is ensuring the legacy of our vast natural areas with their unique landscapes, scenic features, and historic and cultural sites, continues to be a significant part of our province's social fabric. This Legacy Plan is our commitment to future generations that they will have an assortment of outdoor recreational, natural and cultural areas to explore, relax in and enjoy.

The Saskatchewan Provincial Parks Legacy Plan is a tremendous opportunity to ensure Saskatchewan people and families continue to enjoy the breathtaking natural wonders and opportunities to live, work, play and enjoy our heritage. This is our legacy and our gift to future generations.

John T. Nilson, Q.C.
Minister
Saskatchewan Environment

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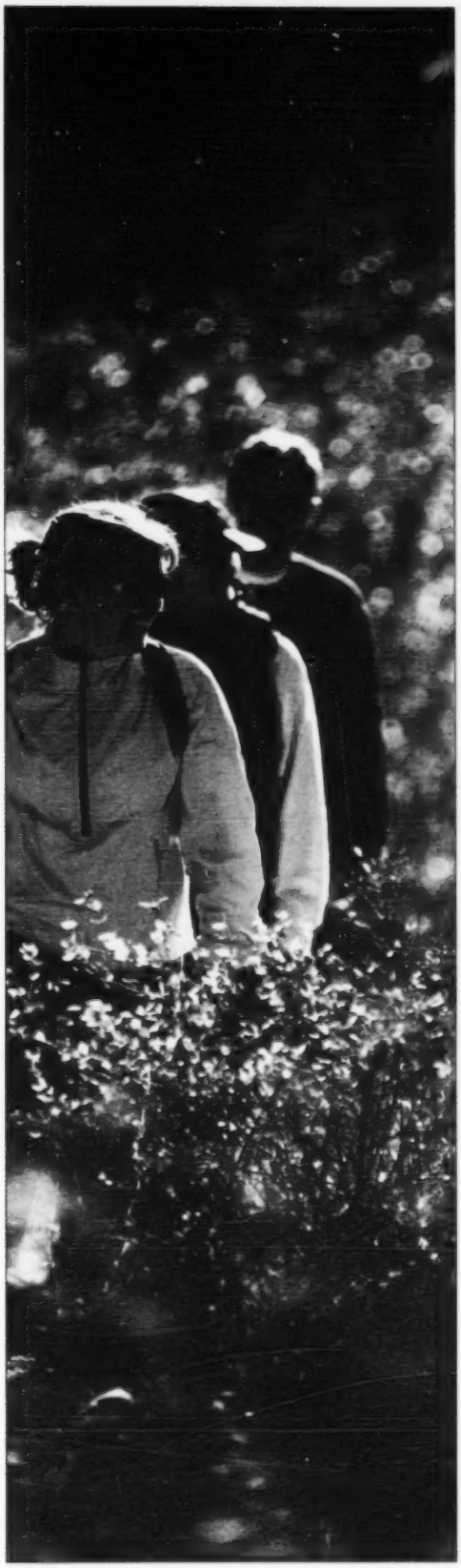


Background

May 1, 2006 marked the 75th anniversary of Saskatchewan's Provincial Parks. On that day, Government announced "Framework For The Future", a new strategic policy for Saskatchewan's Provincial Parks system. The Framework provides a vision, core values, guiding principles and set of strategic outcomes to help ensure a parks legacy for the people of Saskatchewan people and families for generations to come.

Since that time, Saskatchewan Environment was directed to prepare an implementation plan for the new provincial parks policy framework. The plan also included an assessment of provincial park lands and recommended a course of action that considered the views of stakeholders and the general public, gathered through consultations in 2005 and 2006.

Public Opinion on Provincial Parks

Public input into the future of provincial parks has been sought through different mechanisms over the past two years. Common themes from the various public consultations were:

- Most Saskatchewan residents have visited provincial parks and highly value them
- Conservation of the natural and cultural features in provincial parks is critically important;
- Park clients want safe, modern facilities that are well maintained and some additional services and facilities
- Provincial parks are places for learning and experiencing their heritage. They are living classrooms where young and old alike can learn and experience the natural world
- Interest in and for collaborative projects/activities is high
- Saskatchewan people want government to lead by example; there is a high level of interest in demonstrating "green" technology in the parks

Framework for the Future

The Vision

A dynamic and diverse provincial parks system that pro-actively conserves representative and unique parts of Saskatchewan's natural and cultural heritage as an inheritance for present and future generations, while providing an array of opportunities for outdoor recreation, learning and personal renewal and inspiration. Provincial Parks model green, environmentally sustainable practices and collaborative management while contributing to a vibrant, growing tourism industry.

Guiding Principles

- give precedence to conservation;
- ensure public access to outdoor recreation;
- model environmentally sustainable practices;
- ensure opportunities for people to explore and learn;
- respect Aboriginal and Treaty rights and different cultural perspectives;
- public benefits take priority over private interests;
- retain revenue generated by parks fees for use in the provincial parks system;
- public involvement and collaboration; and,
- accountability.

Core Values

- protection of ecosystems and natural/cultural features and resources;
- diverse recreational and learning opportunities;
- clean, secure, accessible and affordable;
- peace and serenity for personal renewal;
- places for friends and family to meet and connect; and,
- cornerstone of Saskatchewan tourism.

Strategic Outcomes

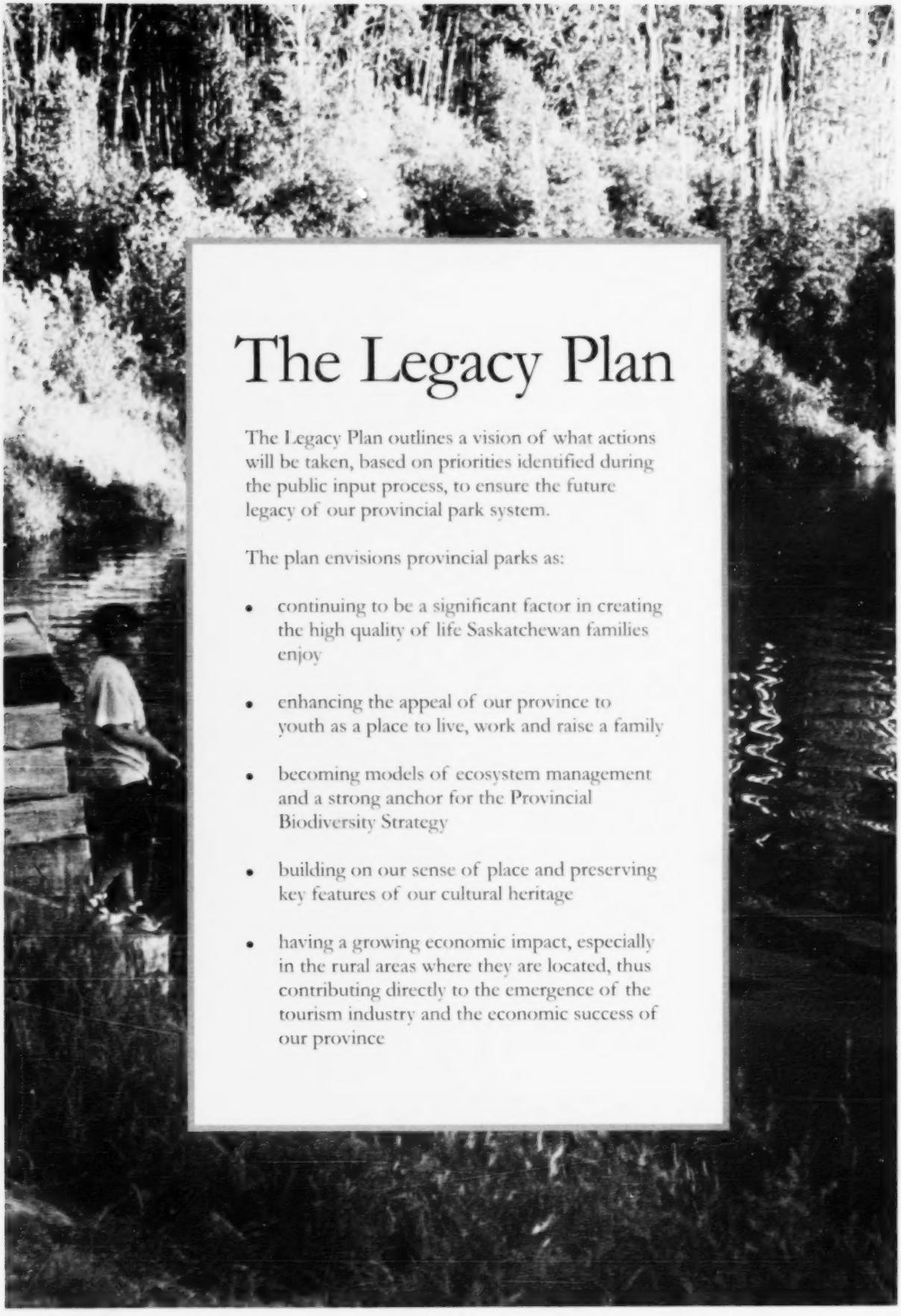
Conservation: biodiversity, representative and unique ecosystems, and natural and cultural areas and resources are preserved within a system of provincial park lands as an inheritance for present and future generations.

Recreation: a variety of well utilized, environmentally sustainable, clean, secure and affordable recreational services and facilities that model green technology and are compatible with public needs are available for residents of, and visitors to Saskatchewan.

Interpretation/Learning: people experiencing provincial parks land gain an understanding of their relationship with the province's natural and cultural heritage and improve their stewardship of our heritage.

Green Sustainable Tourism: Provincial parks provide the base for a growing environmentally and culturally sustainable Saskatchewan tourism industry.

Collaborative Management: private sector, communities, Aboriginal peoples, clients, and interest groups assist in the planning, management and operation of the provincial parks system.



The Legacy Plan

The Legacy Plan outlines a vision of what actions will be taken, based on priorities identified during the public input process, to ensure the future legacy of our provincial park system.

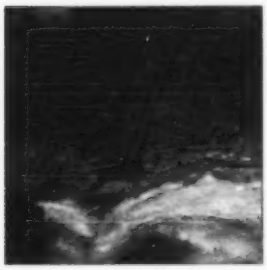
The plan envisions provincial parks as:

- continuing to be a significant factor in creating the high quality of life Saskatchewan families enjoy
- enhancing the appeal of our province to youth as a place to live, work and raise a family
- becoming models of ecosystem management and a strong anchor for the Provincial Biodiversity Strategy
- building on our sense of place and preserving key features of our cultural heritage
- having a growing economic impact, especially in the rural areas where they are located, thus contributing directly to the emergence of the tourism industry and the economic success of our province

Summary of Outcomes

CONSERVATION

Conserving our natural and cultural heritage in our provincial parks will be a key component to ensuring the legacy.



Nature Conservation
Healthy ecosystems and natural values are to be maintained and, where necessary, restored. There is to be no significant loss of native grassland, aquatic or forest ecosystems and all park lands will retain their natural allure.

In parks where major forest ecosystem are located, after detailed planning, the natural disturbance regimes will be restored or replicated through forest harvesting or prescribed fire. In parks where major grassland ecosystems are located, the progression of invasive exotics will be stopped through a combination of prescribed fire, grazing regimes, mechanical treatments and herbicide application. Intensive actions will be taken in conjunction with adjacent landowners to stop or limit the encroachment of invasive species and renew and restore smaller unique grasslands and forested/wooded areas.

Cultural Conservation
Broad cultural resource management programs will be introduced for park lands expanding the focus of programs from existing historic parks and sites. Cultural resources will be preserved and presented to the public in a manner that ensures their integrity.

Artifacts and built resources will be systematically assessed with regular maintenance and capital upgrading programs established.

Archaeological and sacred sites will be identified and documented through collaborative arrangements with communities of interest. Some examples of this type of collaborative arrangement might be for provincial park programs to enter into joint research, planning and management activities. There will be a strong focus on enhanced presention and interpretation of First Nation and Métis heritage and culture with the active involvement of those communities.

RECREATION

The continued enjoyment of the outdoors through camping, walking, canoeing, swimming, snowmobiling and the myriad of activities that Saskatchewan's youth, families and tourists have come to love is a vital part of provincial parks. The legacy plan outlines action in four key areas:

- improving the maintenance and operations of the parks
- upgrading existing facilities
- expanding existing facilities and services to meet public demand
- modeling green technology (e.g. solar power) and sustainable tourism

The private sector will continue to operate their wide range of valuable commercial services like restaurants, hotels, stores and marinas in the parks system.

New businesses will be allowed if they are compatible with public expectations and provincial park policy, and meet other regulatory requirements.

INTERPRETATION/ LEARNING

The types, number and quality of interpretive opportunities and services will be increased. School education programs will be updated and revised to link with provincial curriculum and to interpret the full range of park themes.

Self-directed interpretation will be enhanced and expanded through upgraded interpretive/nature trails to better reflect the full diversity of interpretive themes and improve accessibility where possible.

GREEN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Provincial parks will promote Saskatchewan Parks as places for green sustainable tourism while maintaining an emphasis on high quality customer services and facilities. Provincial parks will diligently work with area attractions and communities to promote the area. Some of these actions will include:

- in cooperation with other agencies, communities and businesses, engage in special events to serve as attractions and entertainment for the visiting public
- updating the provincial park website
- pursuing regional marketing initiatives with communities, tourism associations and businesses
- liaison with Tourism Saskatchewan to market 'destination areas'
- promote provincial parks as the place to see and experience green sustainable tourism
- selective and seasonal marketing to avoid over-use of some parks and redirect customers to underutilized parks during the peak season, expanding the enjoyment of parks into the fringe and shoulder seasons

COLLABORATION

Collaboration and cooperation are, and will continue to be, a regular part of park management. Regular and systematic input from park interest groups and users will be sought through advisory committees, surveys and First Nation and Métis relationship building and partnerships. Existing cooperation on regional landfills and structural fire fighting will be retained in addition to area tourism development and promotion collaborations. Universities, non-government organizations, First Nations and Métis, and communities will be involved in the research and planning of programs and delivery of programs. New park lands will be explored through consultation and relationship building with First Nation and Métis communities and other interested stakeholders.

Provincial Parks...
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For more information, visit our website at
www.saskparks.net